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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 000621

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SUBJECT: CANADA CONTINUES PRESSURE ON BURMA; SENDS CYCLONE
AID

REF: A. STATE 45471

[1](#)B. QUEBEC 00013

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Canada shares U.S. concern about the imposition on the Burmese people of a non-representative constitution, and has been publicly pressuring Burma to bring an end to the country's environment of fear and repression. On May 5, Foreign Minister Bernier conferred honorary Canadian citizenship on Aung San Suu Kyi, underscoring Canada's opposition to the "climate of fear" the Burmese regime has created. Canada plans to respond "appropriately" following the constitutional referendum. On May 5, Canada also announced a grant of C\$2 million in humanitarian aid for cyclone relief, and will consider additional assistance. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) According to Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) Southeast Asia and Pacific Division Deputy Director Evelynne Coulombe, Canada is continuing publicly to pressure Burma to put an end to the country's environment of fear and intimidation, and to take "real steps" towards democracy. Coulombe said that Canada feels it has already spoken out on the issue of Burmese repression, and is currently in a "wait-and-see" mode. She noted that Canada would respond appropriately if the referendum does not meet international standards. The Canadian DCM in Bangkok has requested a visa to cover the referendum, but the Burmese Embassy had indicated -- even before the recent cyclone -- that he could not travel to Burma until at least May 15.

[1](#)3. (U) On May 5, Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier paid tribute to Aung San Suu Kyi in a ceremony on Parliament Hill in Ottawa conferring honorary Canadian citizenship; her cousin Dr. Sein Win, chairman of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, accepted on her behalf. Bernier praised Aung San Suu Kyi's tireless struggle for freedom and democracy in Burma, and underscored that Canada remains "appalled" by the ongoing repression instituted by the Burmese regime and the "climate of fear" created in the country. (Full text in para 6.) On May 6, the Speaker of the House of Commons Peter Milliken at the end of Question Period publicly recognized Sein Win, who rose to warm applause from MPs and observers.

[1](#)4. (U) Minister of International Cooperation Beverley Oda separately announced in Parliament on May 5 a Canadian grant of C\$2 million (approximately USD 2 million) for cyclone relief through the UN, the Red Cross, and other international organizations, and called on the Burmese authorities to provide full and unhindered access to humanitarian groups to assist with relief efforts. (Text of statement in para 7.)

Members of Parliament on May 5 and 6 called for even more generous assistance to the victims, while voicing concerns about the ability of Canada and international community to monitor the Burmese regime's disbursement of aid. According to Minister Oda and DFAIT officials, Canada will consider additional assistance now in light of subsequent updates about the level of destruction, loss of human life, and needs of survivors.

15. (U) As noted in ref b, the Canadian government on March 27 organized a conference on Burma in Quebec City, featuring UN Special Rapporteur Ibrahim Gambari. During the conference, entitled "How the International Community Can Support the UN Efforts in Burma/Myanmar," Canadian Minister for Democratic Reform Peter Van Loan emphasized Canada's commitment to a strong and continuing response to Burmese oppression, and stated that Canada had imposed the strongest sanctions of any country in the world against Burma.

16. (U) Text of May 5 statement by Foreign Minister Bernier on honorary Canadian citizenship for Aung San Suu Kyi

Begin quote

On October 17, 2007, the House of Commons conferred honorary Canadian citizenship on Aung San Suu Kyi in recognition of her long and courageous battle to promote freedom and democracy in Burma. The presentation of this honorary Canadian citizenship to Aung San Suu Kyi is testimony to Canada's long-standing respect and admiration of her tireless struggle, a struggle she has pursued in the face of overwhelming odds.

Canada continues to stand up for the universal values that

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are under siege in Burma today. The Burmese regime is abhorrent to Canadian values. On December 13, Canada imposed the toughest sanction of any country in the world against Burma. We have chosen sanctions that will have an impact on the Burmese regime and clearly indicate Canada's condemnation of that regime's complete disregard for human rights and repression of the democratic movement.

In spite of the calls by Canada and other members of the international community, the Burmese regime has continued to arrest and detain those who oppose it. We once again call upon the regime to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners, and to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the people of Burma. We stand alongside those who, like Aung San Suu Kyi, share our commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

End quote

17. (U) Text of the May 5 statement on provision of humanitarian assistance to Burma:
Begin text

I (Minister Oda) wish to extend my condolences to the families of the deceased and express my concern for those affected by the terrible devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Nargis. The Government of Canada has set aside up to (C)\$2 million to prove urgent relief to the people of Burma. Canada is working closely with trusted partners such as United Nations humanitarian agencies, the Red Cross Movement and experienced non-governmental organizations to determine how Canada's support can best meet the humanitarian needs of the people, once access is allowed by the Burmese government.

On behalf of Canadians, I (Minister Bernier) would like to extend my sympathies to the many thousands of families in Burma who have lost loved ones and whose lives have been severely affected by this disaster," said Minister Bernier. "We call upon the Burmese authorities to provide full and

unhindered access to humanitarian organizations to allow them to assist with the relief efforts.

Core funding already provided by Canada to international humanitarian agencies enables these partners to begin assessments and to provide immediate relief in the aftermath of natural disasters.

The funds announced today will be provided as cash contributions to independent, impartial and neutral Canadian International Development Agency partners, who have the operational capacity to meet humanitarian needs.

In December 2007, Canada made the Special Economic Measures (Burma) Regulations. These measures include an export ban and a prohibition on the provision of Canadian financial services to and from Burma. There are exemptions to these sanctions on humanitarian grounds.

Canadian officials are actively monitoring the situation. To date, there are no reports of Canadian deaths or injuries as a result of the cyclone. Canadians are advised against non-essential travel to Burma due to extensive damage caused.

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